



Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species
Program

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
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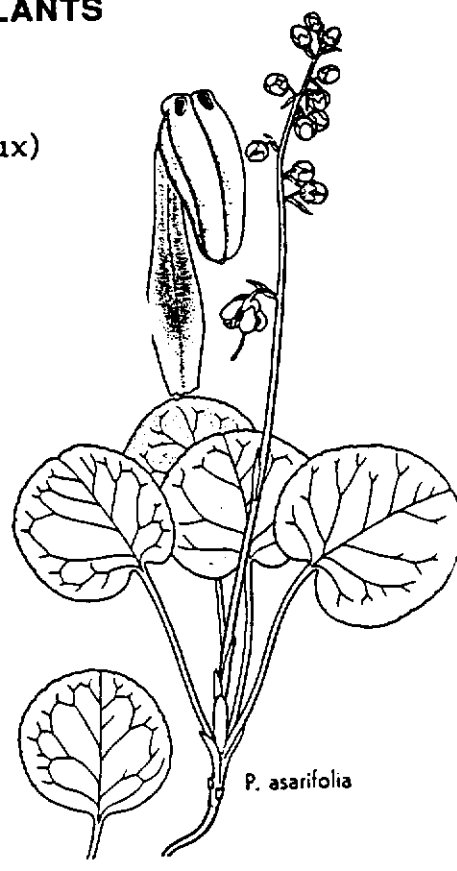
MASSACHUSETTS ENDANGERED PLANTS

PINK PYROLA

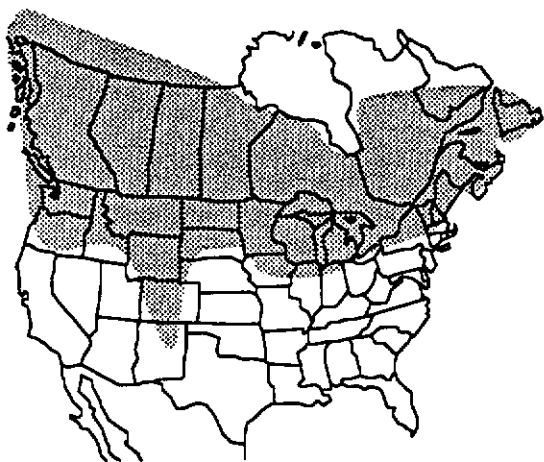
(*Pyrola asarifolia* var. *purpurea* Michaux)

Description

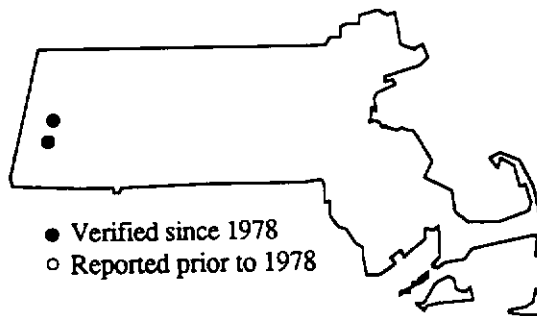
Pink pyrola is a delicate, perennial wild flower in the Wintergreen family (Pyrolaceae). Its thick, 3-6 cm (1.2 - 2.4 in.) long, evergreen leaves are shallowly heart-shaped at their bases. In addition, these rather roundish leaves are borne on long stalks arranged in a rosette near the base of the plant. Pink pyrola's flower stalk reaches from 1.5 to 3 dm (1/3 - 1 1/4 ft.) in height. Its pink or pale purple, nodding flowers occur in a raceme (an elongate, unbranched grouping of stalked flowers). Each of the 4 to 22 blossoms has five petals that are 5-7 mm (0.20 - 0.28 in.) long and ten stamens (male reproductive organs) that open by terminal pores. Flowering season extends from mid June to late July. Pink pyrola's fruit is a capsule (a many-seeded fruit derived from a compound pistil). Some authorities classify pink pyrola as *Pyrola asarifolia* var. *asarifolia*.



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the US & Adjacent Canada. NY Botanical Garden. 1952.



Documented Range of
Pink Pyrola



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

Range

The documented range of pink pyrola extends from Newfoundland to Alaska and south to New York, northern Indiana, Minnesota, New Mexico and Oregon.

Similar Species

Several other species of *Pyrola* occur in Massachusetts and somewhat resemble pink pyrola. Round-leaved pyrola (*P. rotundifolia*) has white petals and oblong or oblong-ovate sepals (members of the lowermost floral whorl). In contrast, the sepals of pink pyrola are triangular. Shinleaf (*P. elliptica*) has white petals and thin, elliptic leaves. Pink pyrola has leathery leaves. Greenish-flowered pyrola (*P. chlorantha*) has white petals veined with green and has leaf blades that are frequently shorter than the petioles (leaf stalks). The leaf blades of pink pyrola are as long or longer than the petioles. Finally, of all these species, only pink pyrola has flowers that are definitely pink or pale purple.

Habitat in Massachusetts

Pink pyrola is found in swamps influenced by calcareous (or alkaline) groundwater seepage and in moist, limy woods. In Massachusetts, it is found only in coniferous fens (areas where cold, nutrient-poor but calcium rich water seeps to the surface). Among the plant species associated with pink pyrola in this state are white pine (*Pinus strobus*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*) and dwarf raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*). Rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with pink pyrola include hemlock parsley (*Conioselinum chinense*) and showy lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium reginae*).

Population Status

Pink pyrola is presently listed as "Endangered" in Massachusetts, where there are two current stations (both of which were rediscovered in 1982, after a lapse of 70 years). Reasons for the plant's rarity in our state include the scarcity of alkaline habitat and the fact that Massachusetts is at the southeastern limit of its range. Pink pyrola was present historically in New York. The species *Pyrola asarifolia* is considered rare in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Iowa, and Indiana.